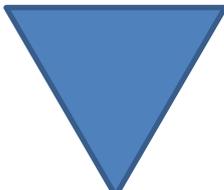


# The Horizontal and Vertical in Mindfulness

By Louis Heath 2015

Horizontal and Vertical Mindfulness			
Sketch 1	Sketch 2	Sketch 3	Sketch 4
			
Horizontal type mindfulness practice and inquiry without much depth of inner silence.	Vertical type strong depth of inner silence with a much narrower focus of inquiry.	Horizontal type practice with some good depth (Healthy insightful practice)	Strong mixture of horizontal and vertical practice giving good equanimity and integration with daily life.

The above sketches could represent varieties of mindfulness practice with the horizontal representing the breadth of mindfulness inquiry and the vertical the depth of inner silence or stillness. There could of course be infinite varieties of these sketches.

Sketch 1 could represent a horizontal type mindfulness with a broad range of inquiry. It indicates a mindfulness that would generally be practiced informally with the practitioner remembering to be present to their experiences from time to time across the range of their life experience. This would often be represented by people who do a course in mindfulness but don't practice the formal meditations.

Sketch 2 vertical type mindfulness indicated by the figure is a practice with strong concentration usually on one object such as the breath. This indicates attention to a narrow range of experience inevitable by the narrow focus on one object. It has the effect of deepening inner silence or a sense of spaciousness. When practiced as a standalone practice without a broader application of inquiry into daily life it can be used to avoid difficulties. Whilst this can be a help at times it lacks the broad application of mindfulness inquiry practice into daily living.

Sketch 3 indicates a healthy mix of both horizontal and vertical mindfulness where a wider inquiry is being practiced along with some concentrated practice giving both depth and breadth to the practice. A good example of this is the three minute breathing space which starts with a broad awareness of what is going on, then moves into the narrow focus of the breath and then moves back out to a wider more spacious awareness.

Sketch 4 represents a practice that has a broad integration of mindfulness inquiry into daily life combined with a strong formal practice of meditation. The wider base indicates a residual sense of inner silence or stillness that is there available at all times. This provides greater stability and resilience in daily living which can result in a general sense of contentment or peace. When difficulties arise they will be held in a more spacious awareness with a greater chance of a mindful and healthier response. A strong sense of this residual inner silence is often experienced by participants after the "day of mindfulness", if included on the course.